Secondhand smoke exposure persists in multi-unit housing

September 11 2012, by Annie Deck-miller

(Medical Xpress)—A majority of Americans who live in multi-unit housing have adopted smoke-free rules in their private homes but millions remain involuntarily exposed to secondhand smoke in this environment, according to a study published in the most recent issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. Researchers led by senior investigator Andrew Hyland, PhD, Chair of the Department of Health Behavior at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI), recommend smoke-free building policies to protect all multiunit residents from secondhand smoke exposure in their homes.

"A vast majority of multi-unit housing residents continue to be exposed to toxic compounds found in secondhand smoke in spite of the adoption of voluntary smoke-free rules for their private homes," said Dr. Hyland. "This study demonstrates widespread support of the adoption of smoke-free building policies."

The national study evaluated attitudes, experiences and acceptance of smoke-free policies among residents of multi-unit housing in the United States. Approximately 80 million Americans live in multi-unit housing. Using the results of this study, the researchers estimate that 30 million multi-unit housing residents with smoke-free rules in their homes may still be exposed to tobacco smoke that enters their residence from other areas of the building.

Hyland and colleagues conducted a nationally representative survey of multi-unit housing residents who live in apartments, duplexes,

double/multifamily homes, condominiums or town houses was 2010. The study sample included both landline and cell-phone-only users. Overall, 29% reported living in smoke-free buildings. Among all respondents, 56% support the implementation of policies prohibiting smoking in all areas of their building, including living units and common areas.

The study also found that 79% of multiunit housing residents have implemented voluntary smoke-free home rules. Those who have reported having these rules were more likely to be non-smokers, have higher education and live with children. Forty-four percent of those with smoke-free rules at home reported being exposed to secondhand smoke in the past year that originated from smoking in other parts of their buildings.

"Residents of multi-unit housing are particularly susceptible to secondhand smoke exposure from nearby units and shared areas such as hallways," said lead author Andrea Licht, MS, a doctoral student with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University at Buffalo. "These residents are trying to protect their families from the dangers of secondhand smoke by not allowing smoking in their homes and would welcome policies that support that goal."

The publication, "Attitudes, Experiences, and Acceptance of Smoke-Free Polices Among U.S. Multi-unit Housing Residents" can be found at ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/ … 105/AJPH.2012.300717 .

Provided by Roswell Park Cancer Institute

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